DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 061 763 EM 009 819

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TITLE The Effects of Territorial Depiction and Disruption on Group Cohesion in a Classroom Setting.
INSTITUTION Illinois State Univ., Normal. Communication Research Center.
PUB DATE 19 Apr 72
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the International Communication Association Annual Convention (Atlanta, Georgia, April 19-22, 1972)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Group Unity; High School Students; *Interpersonal Relationship; *Nonverbal Communication
IDENTIFIERS *Territoriality

ABSTRACT

A study was devised to examine a subject's level of interpersonal territoriality and disruption of territoriality in small group classroom setting. Through an elaborate procedure, subjects were classified as having rigid or loose depictions of territoriality, and were assigned to small groups with each group having at least two rigid and two loose members. The groups met for one hour: for the first half, subjects were allowed to sit where they liked, while in the second half, subjects sat in a different position and next to someone different. A measure of perceived cohesiveness was taken immediately after the second half-hour. Results showed that, contrary to expectations, there were no significant differences on perception of group cohesion between loose and rigid subjects; that the sex of the subject did not significantly interact with territoriality in terms of perceived cohesion or cohesion potential; and that rigid male subjects' perceptions of group cohesion was less, but the difference was only marginally significant. Problems that may account for lack of positive results include the operational definition of rigid or loose territoriality, the index of group cohesiveness, the extent of disruption of territory, and the choice of dependent variable. (SH)

ED 061763

Communication Research Center

Illinois State University

THE EFFECTS OF TERRITORIAL DEPICTION AND DISRUPTION ON GROUP COHESION IN A CLASSROOM SETTING

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by

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Atlanta, Georgia

April 19-22, 1972

CM 009819

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the study of non-verbal communication has aroused considerable interest in the field of speech-communication. Many areas of non-verbal communication have been explored and acknowledged as contributors to language and communication, but one area has received little empirical study. This is the area of proxemics, which the anthropologist Edward Hall defines as "interelated theories of man's use of space as a specialized elaboration of culture." Probably little research has been done in the area of proxemics mainly because everyone knows that space exists, but most of us have not overtly acknowledged its' importance.

Through proxemics and another more specialized term, territoriality, Hall is suggesting that the way man relates spatially to others is a form of non-verbal behavior which has meaning. It is the suggestion of this paper that a relationship can be drawn between a subject's depiction of his concept of interpersonal territoriality and actual disruption of interpersonal territoriality in the small group classroom setting.

TERRITORIALITY

According to Hall, territoriality refers to "behavior by which an organism lays claim to an area and defends it against those of his own species." Numerous experiments, beginning with Eliot Howard's bird studies have set out to establish territoriality in animals. (Audrey, 1970) Such drives have been sufficiently established in most of the animal kingdom, ranging from birds to primates. Many attempts have been made to link man with territoriality. Hediger (1961) and Audrey (1970) present interesting speculative arguments concerning this problem. Lyman and Scott (1967) have established one theoretical base for man's territorial instinct. They establish four types of territory: public, home, interactional, and body. They also establish three types of territorial encroachment, all of which consist of a prefered space or seat being invaded by an outside source.

Much of the research dealing with territoriality and the small group has concerned itself with two major areas: leadership, and the spacial factor in face-to-face discussion groups. The leadership aspect is somewhat irrelevant to this study, but the spacial factor deserves some attention. Hasse and DiMatta (1970) conducted a study where subjects (counselors, administrators, and clients) used a semantic differential to respond to photographs depicting four proxemic seating arrangements common to counseling. Results showed significant differences in preference for certain arrangements and a significant interaction between group membership and preference for particular arrangements. Analysis of these results seem to indicate that persons typically prefer certain seating arrangements over others in a group. One can hypothesize from this that if a group member is moved from a seat

he prefers it will cause some reaction, either within the person or within the group.

METHODOLOGY

For the purposes of this study, depiction of interpersonal territoriality was operationalized as the degree of correspondence between a subject's visualized preferences for physical locations in which interpersonal communication could take place and placement of self and preferred peers in these locations. The subjects for the study were sophomore students in a basic speech course at Ottawa High School, Ottawa, Illinois.

The first step in the study was to determine each subject's depiction of the concept of territoriality, and specifically whether it was rigid or loose. The following three step procedure was followed: The subject was asked to first, draw a picture of a place (preferably the home) where six people could comfortably be seated for a face-to-face conversation. Next, the student was asked to rank according to his personal preference the six seating locations.

A few days later, each subject was asked to name five people they would invite into the home for the purpose of interpersonal communication on a topic of common interest. They were then asked to rank these persons in terms of personal preference. A week later, the persons listed by each of the subjects were arranged in random order, and were returned to the students along with the unnumbered copy of his seating arrangement . The student was then asked to assign the five persons listed, and themselves, to the seats in their drawing.

The isomorphism between ranking of physical locations and ranking of perferred friends was determined by computing a Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient for each subject. In addition the placement of self in a physical location was also used as a cross reference. On the bases of these two variables, subjects were classified as having rigid or loose depiction of territoriality (rigid subjects put themselves in preference locations and maintained a high correlation between location and personal preferences). Subjects were assigned to four a five member groups with each group having at least two rigid and two loose members. The sex of the subject was also used as an independent variable for the study.

The main dependent variable of concern in this study was the perception of group cohesiveness. Cohesion may be operationalized as the sum of all the forces that affect each member of a small group. The amount of cohesion was measured by a modified form of the Seashore Group Cohesiveness Index. (see Appendix)

After being classified as having rigid or loose depictions of territoriality and placed into groups based on this information, the groups were announced to the subjects. Prior to the first meeting of the groups the subjects were asked to, given their previous experiences with the proposed membership, estimate the amount of cohesion that would be manifested in the discussions. This information was ascertained by having each student complete a "Prediction of Group Cohesion" index. (see Appendix)

The groups were scheduled to meet for one hour. For the first half of the discussion, each subject was allowed to sit where he liked and next to whom he liked in the group. For the second half of the discussion the subjects were instructed to sit in a different position and also, left of someone different than for the first half hour. This was done to maximize the difference between seating arrangements for each member between the first and second meetings. Immediately following the second half-hour, a measure of perceived cohesiveness was taken via the "Group Cohesiveness Index." (see Appendix)

The hypotheses for the study were as follows:

(1) Prior to discussion and disruption, subjects with rigid depictions of territoriality will perceive more cohesion potential for the group membership than will subjects who have loose depictions of territoriality.

(2) Prior to discussion and disruption, the sex of the subject will significantly interact with depictions of territoriality in terms of perceived cohesion potential for the group membership.

(3) After discussion and disruption, subjects with rigid depiction of territoriality will perceive less cohesion for the group membership than will subjects who have loose depictions of territoriality.

(4) After discussion and disruption the sex of the subject will significantly interact with depictions of territoriality in terms of perceived cohesion for the group membership.

RESULTS

Hypothesis one (prior to discussion and disruption, subjects with rigid depictions of territoriality will perceive more cohesion potential for the group membership than will subjects who have loose depictions of territoriality)was unsupported. The mean score on the "Prediction of Group Cohesiveness" pretest was 12.67 for males with rigid territoriality, an 12.75 for males with loose territoriality. For females the mean was 12.15 for rigid and 12.21 for loose territoriality. None of these scores showed any significant difference.

The second hypothesis (prior to discussion and disruption, the sex of the subject will significantly interact with depictions of territoriality in terms of perceived cohesion potential for the group membership) was also unsupported.

Hypothesis 3 (after discussion and disruption, subjects with rigid depiction of territoriality will perceive less cohesion for the group membership than will subjects who have loose depictions of territoriality) was significant at the .10 level for males, but was not supported for the females on the basis of the "Group Cohesiveness Index" posttest The mean for males with rigid territoriality was 12.33 and for males with loose territoriality 14.50, again showing some significance.

The mean for the females with rigid territoriality was 14.00 while the mean for females with loose territoriality was 13.64 again, not significant.

Hypothesis 4(After discussion and disruption the sex of the subject will significantly interact with depictions of territoriality in terms of perceived cohesion for the group membership)was unsupported for both males and females on the basis of the post test.

IMPLICATIONS

It seems necessary, at this point to discuss the results and implications of this study. Only one of the hypothesis approached significance and that being the one dealing with rigid males perceiving less cohesion after the discussion than males who had loose depictions of territoriality. Further, this was only significant at the .10 level. This hypothesis in regards to females, and the three remaining hypotheses were unsupported.

There could, of course be many reasons that the hypotheses for the most part turned out to be unsupported though, only four will be mentioned here.

One problem may have been with the method of discovering whether a student had rigid or loose territoriality. The subjects may have just marked any seating location as preferred without thinking about their answers. Also, it is possible that a drawing even of the home, or a familiar place, did not involve the student enough in the situation to truly determine what a "preferred" seat actually was. It would be helpful if there were a paper and pencil test for determining depiction of territoriality, but thus far none have been developed. This might be a topic for further research.

Second, the Seashore Index of Group Cohesiveness, which was used as the measuring instrument for the dependent variable, may not have worked as well as it should have. The instrument was loosely constructed, had only three questions and was easy to complete, possibly causing the subjects to just mark any box at random without really thinking seriously about their answers. If the experiment were to be repeated it would probably be wise to construct a longer, more intricate instrument. One other problem concerning the instrument itself was the fact that the pretest and the post test, were almost alike which could have caused the subjects, on the post test, to mark, from memory, the same answers as on the pretest and again, not really think seriously about their answers.

Another possible problem intrinsic in this study could possibly be that persons with rigid territoriality did not feel that their territory had been invaded and that they had been disrupted. Changing the seating arrangement in a small group discussion may not seem like territorial encroachment, especially if the group members did not feel anchored or involved in the discussion group, with the group members, and with the spatial arrangement. To have a subject with rigid territoriality feel that his

territory was being invaded, it might be necessary to construct a situation which causes the S to be more anchored or involved in the spatial surrounding (ie. the subject's home or office, etc.).

Lastly, and probably more importantly, it is possible that the wrong dependent variable was utilized in this study. It is still the opinion of these writers that a relationship can be drawn between a subject's depiction of his concept of interpersonal territoriality and actual disruption of interpersonal territoriality in the small group classroom setting. This relationship, however may involve something other than the perception of group cohesiveness. (ie. interpersonal obstacles, reduction in problem solving ability, interpersonal conflict, reduction of source credibility, etc.) Though these factors all go together to form cohesion (the sum of all the forces which affect each group member) a person with rigid territoriality whose territory is invaded may only be affected in one of the above areas, which may not affect the total atmosphere, or cohesion, at all. Thus, possibly a different dependent variable would have provided more fruitful results.

As noted above, these writers still feel a relationship can be drawn between a subject's depiction of his concept of interpersonal territory and actual disruption of interpersonal territory in the small group-classroom setting. To scientifically prove such a hypothesis, however, the experiment will need to be rerun either changing the measuring instrument for depiction of territoriality or for perception of cohesion, changing the spatial setting for disruption and/or changing the dependent variable.

APPENDIX--PRETEST

Name_____
Hour_____
Group Number_____

PREDICTION OF GROUP COHESIVENESS

1. Do you feel that you will be really a part of your discussion group?

___Really will be a part of my discussion group
___Will be included in most ways
___Will be included in some ways, but not in others
___Don't feel I really will belong
___Don't work well with any one group of people.

2. If you had a chance to discuss the same question in another discussion group, how would you feel about moving?

___Would want very much to move
___Would rather move than stay where I am
___Would make no difference to me
___Would rather stay where I am than move
___Would want very much to stay where I am

3. How do you feel your discussion group will compare with other discussion groups on each of the follwoing points?

	Better than most	About same as most	Not as good as most
a. The way the group members get along together	_____	_____	_____
b. The way the group members stick together.	_____	_____	_____
c. The way the group members help each other.	_____	_____	_____

APPENDIX--POST TEST

Name_____
Hour_____
Group Number_____

INDEX OF GROUP COHESIVENESS

1. Do you feel that you are really a part of your discussion group?
   ____Really a part of my discussion group
   ____Included in most ways
   ____Included in some ways, but not in others
   ____Don't feel I really belong
   ____Don't work with any one group of people.

2. If you had a chance to discuss the same question in another discussion group, how would you feel about moving?
   ____Would want very much to move
   ____Would rather move than stay where I am
   ____Would make no difference to me
   ____Would rather stay where I am
   ____Would want very much to stay where I am

3. How does your discussion group compare with other discussion groups on each of the following points?

	Better than most	About same as most	Not as good as most
a. The way the group members get along together.	____	____	____
b. The way the group members stick together.	____	____	____
c. The way the group members help each other.	____	____	____

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